

Review of current microgrants & macrogrants process

Introduction

Microgrants were first offered by the charity in the summer of 2010 following requests from the community. Decision for applications were initially made by a sub-committee of two members of the Board of Directors. When macrogrants were introduced the following year, decision for microgrants were delegated to a single board member, with applications for macrogrants to be reviewed by the board at its next full meeting.

At the July 2013 board meeting, as part of the process recommended by the Hudson Review of increasing focus on strategic rather than operational matters, and in an attempt at faster decision making, it was decided that decision for macrogrants be assigned to the Chief Executive based on recommendation by a Grants Committee consisting of one trustee, one other community member, and one member of staff. At the same time, the trustee then responsible for microgrants approval announced his decision to step down from the board. A decision were made that approval for microgrants were to follow the same Grants Committee recommendation to Chief Executive process, with the formal distinction between microgrants (£5-£250) and macrogrants (£250-£2,000) remaining in place.

Current situation

The Grants Committee currently consist of Chris Keating, John Byrne, and Katie Chan. Chris accepted the position on a temporary basis until new trustees were appointed who may have more time or interest in the position. In October, John Byrne applied for and has been offered the position of part time Wikimedian in Residence at the Royal Society, for a fixed term of 6 months to start in January 2014.

Since the reform of the process in July 2013, there have been three accepted applications for macrogrants, with one currently pending review, compared to one unfunded application in the previous two years. On that basis, the change in process for macrogrants has been a success. On the other hand, with the need to await for the responses of busy and hence at times unresponsive committee members, the time taken to review applications for microgrants has increased.

Approximately 5% of the project grants budget for 2013-2014 of £20,000 has currently been spent to date. We estimate a final figure of around 20% for this project by the end of the financial year, which is an improvement but still disappointing.

Proposal

1. The formal abolition of the distinction between microgrants and macrogrants into a general project grants process, given the distinction now serves no real purpose.
2. A trustee replacement for Chris Keating on the Grants Committee.
3. Due to perceived conflicts arising from his appointment as Wikimedian in Residence, and the fact that he will have even less time to respond than he does now, a replacement from the community for John Byrne. John to remain on the committee if he wishes until the start of his work at the Royal Society.
4. A fixed timeline of one week from notification of new grants applications for initial comments and objection to be raised. Commenting period would be extended flexibly based on points raised by members. If no serious objection are raised during this period, or if sufficient agreement for acceptance exist, then the grant application are to be approved by the Chief Executive. Extra conditions on acceptance may be applied as appropriate.
5. To ensure there are enough people reviewing applications in case of members unavailability. One or two extra volunteers to be recruited by the Volunteer Support Organiser to serve on the Grants Committee.